

SCOUTS-L

FUELS & FIRES

Date: Sat, 19 Nov 1994 02:13:25 -0500 (EST)
From: "Michael F. Bowman" <mfbowman@cap.gwu.edu>
Subject: Re: National Update

On Fri, 18 Nov 1994, Paul H. Brown wrote:

> **Does the revised edition of Guide to Safe Scouting revive the guideline**
> **that no liquid fuels are to be used to start (charcoal, wood, etc.) fires?**
> **This guideline appeared in a (1988, I think) national chemical fuels**
> **policy, but doesn't appear in the 1993 _Guide_.**

>

> **Thanx**

>

> **Paul H. Brown**

> **ASM, Troop 807**

> **GW District, NCAC**

Paul,

The BSA's 1993 Health and Safety Guide at p. 14 specifically prohibits starting fires with liquid fuels. The Safe Scouting Guide edited and distributed by our Council does not include this point. However, the National policy takes precedence. The rule has not changed.

Speaking only for myself in the Scouting Spirit, Michael F Bowman

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Date: Sat, 19 Nov 1994 02:44:25 -0500 (EST)
From: "Michael F. Bowman" <mfbowman@cap.gwu.edu>
Subject: Multiple Topics
To: Robert Drueckhammer <Drueck@AOL.COM>

Robert,

The Guide to Safe Scouting (both 93 and 94) omits the prohibition. However, it is still in the BSA Health and Safety Guide. As I understand it this latter guide sets out national policy, whereas the former is advisory. Clarification?

Could you forward the E-mail that started the discussion on the paint gun situation. I am getting all the discussion, but my local listserver dumped a bunch of messages including this one before I got to it. Many thanks in advance.

By the way, I enjoyed your caring solution! You'd be welcome here as an SDE anytime.

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Date: Sun, 20 Nov 1994 12:37:27 EST
From: Nathan Brindle <NATHAN@UBVM.BITNET>
Subject: Re: National Update

On Sun, 20 Nov 1994 08:08:41 -0500 Paul H. Brown said:
>I didn't know there was a Health and Safety Guide that was different from
>the Guide to Safe Scouting. What else is edited out? How can I get the
>unedited version, so I don't have someone come down on me at a
camporee
>for violating some policy I have no way of knowing?

No, nay, nyet, iie, non, lo!

The Guide to Safe Scouting <superseded> the Health and Safety Guide. Take your definitive rulings from the GSS, not the HSG. The last HSG I saw was dated something like 1988 (although I won't say for sure...).

>Thanx again.
You're welcome. :)

Nathan

Date: Sun, 20 Nov 1994 23:10:14 -0500 (EST)
From: "Michael F. Bowman" <mfbowman@cap.gwu.edu>
Subject: Re: National Update
To: "Paul H. Brown" <phbrown@CAP.GWU.EDU>

Paul,

Both guides are for sale at the Scout Service Center. In Scoutmaster Fundamentals we try to make a point of teaching this to all new Scout leaders as well.

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Date: Sun, 20 Nov 1994 23:24:59 -0500 (EST)
From: "Michael F. Bowman" <mfbowman@cap.gwu.edu>
Subject: Liquid Accelerants

Nathan, et al,

The Health and Safety Guide is still alive and well. Here the 1993 edition is still for sale, although I've heard a 1994 edition is out there. This Guide states BSA policy and clearly prohibits using liquid accelerants to start fires. The Guide to Safe Scouting elaborates most of what is in the Health and Safety Guide, but does not address this particular issue. My understanding is that the National Policy takes precedence over an implementing guide; e.g. Guide to Safe Scouting.

Now speaking as a jurist, if I were representing a Scout burned by using a liquid fuel to start a fire, I would make sure that the Jury got to see the prohibition in the Health and Safety Guide after learning that the leaders permitted this abuse. >From then on, my case would be on damages, having established negligence per se.

Putting my Commissioner's hat back on, I must say that all of this wrangling over what this or that book or guide says, despite well-intentioned motivations, is deeply disturbing to me! We are as leaders here to serve the youth who participate in Scouting programs. One of our fundamental concerns should be with safety of programs.

Yes, you or I or any number of folks can safely light a charcoal fire in the backyard cooker after a liberal application of charcoal lighter. But that's not the point. Too many adults and many more youth members, don't think or realize the danger when they use liquid fuels to start fires.

When I was a Camp Program Director, the OA did a service project of cleaning out the camp's warehouses. All the stuff was piled in a field to be burned (in the days before ecology awareness). The pile was about thirty feet long, ten high and ten wide. The Ranger poured about 20 gallons of gasoline on the fire and went back to his truck to get a torch, which he intended to light and throw onto the fire from a respectable distance. To my utter horror, I watched as the Camp Director accompanied by a Commissioner (a 30 year veteran) walked up to the pile. The Commissioner gave the CD a matchbook, which he promptly used. The resulting explosion threw both of them about ten feet in the air and

thirty feet backwards, burning off all their body hair and outer clothing. Now imagine, if this had been the Council fire and it had been lighted off by a Scout!

I've also seen adults squirting lighter fluid into a lit fire, spraying aerosol mixtures into a fire, pouring oil on a fire, and the worst was a "bright" fellow who laid a fire under a dining fly, then liberally drenched the wood with kerosine. In the latter instance the only loss was the dining fly and a half acre of alfalfa. In these instances all were asking for trouble and lucky. Now what happens when a Scout replicates these behaviors with far less experience and luck?

Before anyone advocates using liquid accelerants to start a fire, I'd suggest they visit the nearest burn-trauma center to see what happens to a human body when it burns and learn about the agonizing treatments that follow.

Come on folks, there are plenty of ways to start fires without the liquid fuels. They just aren't necessary. Its also good Scoutcraft for the Scouts to learn these techniques, which build their self-esteem and self-confidence. Why haggle over a rule, when the risk doesn't justify the practice and when the alternative far better serves the purposes of Scouting?

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Date: Mon, 21 Nov 1994 07:49:10 -0500 (EST)
From: "Paul H. Brown" <phbrown@CAP.GWU.EDU>
Subject: Re: National Update
To: "Michael F. Bowman" <mfbowman@CAP.GWU.EDU>

I took the scoutmaster fundamentals course last month (Oct). We were told that starting fires with liquids was verboten, but the leaders started the Sat lunch charcoal with charcoal lighter fluid anyway. When I asked about the policy (after having the Guide to Safe Scouting distributed to our group and not being able to find the policy in the book), I was told that the policy came from a "chemical fuels policy" book that nobody had a copy of.

When I found the chemical fuels policy book later, I discovered it was a 1988 publication. As I recall, there has been some controversy about chemical stove use by boys in the past, so I wonder if the 1988 chemical fuels policy is an outgrowth of that (IMHO) misguided effort. Wood fires are not the best things for the environment, and a troop outing can do a lot of damage with them on a weekend if all meals are cooked over wood. Boys need to be taught proper use of chemical stoves, which I think the present program does.

I'll run down to the scout shop one of these days and get the unexpurgated version.

I'm not a pyromaniac. I received my 2nd class rank when a 2 match fire was required, and attempt to find dry tinder in rainstorms to demonstrate to the boys that it can be done even in inclement conditions. And my own sons (ages 8 & 12) are learning the same skills. Even the younger one is amazed when someone tries to light a finger-sized stick with a match.

Nice chatting w/ you.

Date: Mon, 21 Nov 1994 23:24:52 -0500 (EST)
From: "Michael F. Bowman" <mfbowman@cap.gwu.edu>
Subject: GEN: Fuels
To: "Paul H. Brown" <phbrown@CAP.GWU.EDU>

Paul,

I too learned how to make a fire with two matches for Second Class. Later it was flint and steel. Sometime later a Scoutmaster (Marine LT) taught us how to make a fire using a watch lense. Later as part of the path to becoming a Firecrafter in Central Indiana Council, I learned to make fire by friction with a hand bow. All of these were great at building confidence and self-esteem. True, we are now more educated about the environment and know that we need to be careful not to build fires when its not necessary. This necessarily means rethinking cooking for a lot of troops. Most have gone to propane. At the same time fuel policies have developed to insure safe use. We now have a stovemanship card like the old toten' chip - same purpose - safe use. Many areas have courses available to leaders on safe fuel use. More information on fuels can be found in the BSA Publication - Camp Health and Safety No. 19-308. For those of us in National Capital Area Council, the Council policy on chemical and liquid fuels is found in Part VII Fuels and Fire Prevention of the Council Safe Scouting Guide.

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Date: Mon, 21 Nov 1994 08:11:47 -0700
From: BILL NELSON <nelsonb@aztec.inre.asu.edu>
Subject: Health and Safety Guide

I would like to thank all of those who have contributed to the discussion about using fuels to start fires. I would also like to thank those who discussed the Health and Safety Guide. I was aware of a restriction on the starting of fires by word of mouth but no one gave me the reference until now. It is easy to tell a boy to not use lighter fluid, it is not so easy to tell a parent (or fellow leader), I am glad to be armed with a little more info. I will ask our Council for more info as well.

thanks again, YiS,
Bill

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Bill Nelson, Webelos Den Leader
Eagles Patrol, Pack 878
Tempe District, Grand Canyon Council
Phoenix, AZ USA

Date: Mon, 21 Nov 1994 23:39:48 -0500 (EST)
From: "Michael F. Bowman" <mfbowman@cap.gwu.edu>
Subject: Re: Health and Safety Guide
To: BILL NELSON <nelsonb@aztec.inre.asu.edu>

Bill,

Glad to have been one of the ones to have helped. Having seen the results of a bad accident and the suffering, my hope is that we can use this information to prevent the same for even just one Scout.

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Date: Mon, 21 Nov 1994 11:35:27 -0500
From: Lisa Varner <lvarner@FREENET.COLUMBUS.OH.US>
Subject: Re: Liquid Accelerants

Boy, Micheal you certainly hit the nail on the head with this one! Just because someone is a scout does not mean they can handle any lighter fluids/even propane. I have seen many a hairless arm or lack of eyebrows from people who think they know how to light a fire! Doesn't scouts condone firestarter (candle wax poured into paper egg cartons) anymore?

I personally don't think anyone who cannot start a fire without any liquids should never be able to touch liquids, especially in front of any kids. Kids are so facinated with fire, especially big fire, they don't understand how adding liquid can make a fire crawl up your arm. I don't know a troop that doesn't have their own firebugs!

Thanks, but I will stick to A frames and twigs! I've worked in the burn unit and seen what it does, my husband was also burned as a child by electrical burns and although not exactly the same it was no picnic!

Hand me just one match please!

**Lisa Varner << lvarner@freenet.columbus.oh.us >>
Haven't been there. Don't want to go. Don't need another t-shirt!**

Date: Wed, 23 Nov 1994 22:36:45 -0500 (EST)
From: "Michael F. Bowman" <mfbowman@cap.gwu.edu>
Subject: Re: Multiple Topics
To: Drueck@aol.com

Robert,

Thanks for writing back. As you saw in your collection of E-Mail, I got a little tired of the wrangling over rules and urged folks to get to the heart of the matter which is safe Scouting and risk reduction.

The mail I missed on the paint gun, came in late due to problems with our freenet server. I read it and responded privately to John, giving him some thoughts in addition to the public posting.

In real life, I am a Senior Trial Attorney in the Navy's Office of the General Counsel. For five years in this career, I was chief counsel to the Naval Inspector General, inspecting Navy Commands and investigating problems. >From this experience, I've learned a lot about organizational efficiency and how to fix things gone astray. In some ways I've applied those I.G. skills to BSA activities and hope that I've helped.

Right now I am a member of the NCAC Religious Relationships Committee, a Deputy District Commissioner (Commissioner Training) (our District is 6000 Scouts strong and second largest in the U.S. We are one of two districts that I know of to have DDCs. Recently I was in charge of District Exploring. I've also done stints at Cub Scout Leader Training and Roundtables. I'm on our District Committee's nominating committee and its awards committee (District Award of Merit). I've been a Cubmaster, Scoutmaster, and lots of other things. Spent nine years on Camp Staffs - commissioner in two camps, program director in three. I've been National Camp School trained three times. >From Wood Badge NE-CS-41, I've learned the lessons of Wood Badge. As a youth I attended national OA and Exploring Conferences, became an Eagle Scout, was a lodge chief, was recognized and thus ended up Vigil Honor, and even became a Firecrafter (organization similar to OA in a Council that did not have OA). All of which is to say, I've been doing Scouting over the last 30 years both as a youth and adult. In addition I am working on the 3rd edition of a book called A Scout's Duty To God and Country, which we hope to put in publication next year. The first two editions reached over 1000 people through donated copying, postage and other help without any cost to the recipients. Whew!

Tell me about your background and what you do as a DE. I'm always amazed at the different roles professionals play. I've seen quite a bit as I've participated in Scouts in several states and councils.

**Speaking only for myself in the Scouting Spirit, Michael F Bowman
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Date: Thu, 24 Nov 1994 02:39:12 -0500 (EST)
From: "Michael F. Bowman" <mfbowman@cap.gwu.edu>
Subject: GEN: Adults and Safety Hazards

Susan,

Your question raises a broader issue of what to do when any leader just doesn't want to follow a rule, especially if it is safety related.

Most of the time I've found that its a matter of education. Most leaders want to do a good job and set a good example. They may not realize the danger they are creating or that a Scout is apt to do exactly what they have done and shouldn't have. I'd suggest an educating discussion to give the person the opportunity to amend their behavior. Try gentle persuasion first. You might start out asking their help in solving a problem and then explain the consequences.

If that doesn't get action, try enlisting the support of another Scouter that the culprit respects and defers to in other matters.

Of course you can also use your resources and ask for help from one of the commissioner staff. If you're not sure about this, call your District Commissioner, who in most cases will be happy to give advice or help directly as the situation warrants.

If the problem is occuring at a District or Council event, the folks running the show can intervene.

At our last District Camporee, where I was a roving commissioner checking on units, I ran into a situation where an old-timer, distinguished Scoutmaster was having trouble with a propane stove flaming up. He was so engrossed in trying to make the thing work, that he hadn't noticed that he was right under the edge of the canvas dining fly covering their kitchen rea. I quietly asked him to move the stove, he replied he had everything under control. NOT! After a discussion on fire danger and a couple more requests, he grudgingly was assisted in moving the stove by two of the other leaders, who by then understood the problem.

A couple of sites down, I ran into two green unit leaders getting ready to art charcoal for dutch ovens with lighter fluid. They didn't know any other way. Instant demonstration time. I showed them how to do it two different ways. They put the lighter fluid in the trunk of a car, safely

away from harm. I've also had a few times where I've had a leader refuse point blank to cooperate on a safety issue. In such cases, I've told them that we'd have to ask them to leave, if they weren't willing to abide by rules designed to promote safety for their Scouts. They didn't like it, but complied.

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Date: Sat, 12 Aug 1995 10:33:44 -0400 (EDT)
From: "Michael F. Bowman" <mfbowman@CapAccess.org>
To: "Paul H. Brown" <phbrown@CAPaccess.org>
Subject: Re: Liquid Fuel Rules and Training (fwd)

Paul,

I took a look at the liquid fuels rules that Gary had and thought they were a bit over-cooked with too much emphasis on the rules and suspensions and not enough on training and care. You could probably come

up with a much shorter policy that would work better; e.g. We abide by BSA's policies on Liquid Fuels (attached) and expect all adults and Scouts to follow these policies. Mr. _____ is in charge of training for _____ and the SPL is in charge of training for _____. **YOU MAY NOT HANDLE**

FUELS OR START FIRES AT ANY ACTIVITY UNTIL YOU HAVE BEEN TRAINED AND HAVE

RECEIVED A FIREMAN'S CHIT. If you cannot or fail to abide by these simple rules, you will be asked to have a conference with the Scoutmaster followed by an appearance before the Troop Committee, which may decide to

either warn you, suspend you or discharge you from the Troop depending on

the nature of your violation of these rules. **WE ARE CONCERNED THAT EVERY**

SCOUT WILL EXERCISE CAUTION AND SAFETY IN HANDLING ANY FIRE OR FUELS,

BOTH TOWARDS HIMSELF AND OTHERS. If you have any doubts or questions

about proper handling of either fire or fuels, ask the Scoutmaster or SPL first.

In addition to the forgoing the following fuel related activities are restricted to adults: . . .

Keep it simple.

Speaking only for myself in the Scouting Spirit, Michael F. Bowman
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